

than the mouth of the Meta; while from the Mission of Uruana the mountains approach the eastern bank more and more. As the strength of the current increases in proportion as the river grows narrower, the progress of our boat became much slower. We continued to ascend the Orinoco under sail, but the high and woody grounds deprived us of the wind. At other times the narrow passes between the mountains by which we sailed, sent us violent gusts, but of short duration. The number of crocodiles increased below the junction of the Rio Arauca, particularly opposite the great lake of Capanaparo, which communicates with the Orinoco, as the Laguna de Cabullarito communicates at the same time with the Orinoco and the Rio Arauca. The Indians told us that the crocodiles came from the inlands, where they had been buried in the dried mud of the savannahs. As soon as the first showers arouse them from their lethargy, they crowd together in troops, and hasten toward the river, there to disperse again. Here, in the equinoctial zone, it is the increase of humidity that recalls them to life; while in Georgia and Florida, in the temperate zone, it is the augmentation of heat that rouses these animals from a state of nervous and muscular debility, during which the active powers of respiration are suspended or singularly diminished. The season of great drought, improperly called the summer of the torrid zone, corresponds with the winter of the temperate zone; and it is a curious physiological phenomenon to observe the alligators of North America plunged into a winter-sleep by excess of cold, at the same period when the crocodiles of the Llanos begin their siesta or summer-sleep. If it were probable that these animals of the same family had heretofore inhabited the same northern country, we might suppose that, in advancing towards the equator, they feel the want of repose after having exercised their muscles for seven or eight months, and that they retain under a new sky the habits which appear to be essentially linked with their organization.

Having passed the mouths of the channels communicating with the lake of Capanaparo, we entered a part of the Orinoco, where the bed of the river is narrowed by the mountains of Baraguan. It is a kind of strait, reaching